

Introduced By: Councilmember Austin-Lane

Resolution 2006-58

**Resolution Strongly Urging the WMATA Board to Disapprove the Proposed
Amendment of the Mass Transit Plan Regarding the Takoma Metro Station
So As to Preserve Full and Continued Access to the Station
Facilities for Transit Users**

- WHEREAS,** Takoma Park, Maryland is a transit oriented community where 25 per cent of the workforce commutes by public transit and another 18 percent carpools, walks or bikes to work; a community where 61 percent of the households have zero or only one automobile; a community served by eighteen Ride-On and Metrobus routes, ten of which use the Takoma Station; a community which parks in the short-term-parking-only Takoma Station parking lot to take the Metro to run errands, attend meetings, and attend cultural and sporting events, and shop; and
- WHEREAS,** the Council and residents of Takoma Park have long supported the Metro system and have advocated for dedicated public funding of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (“WMATA”); and
- WHEREAS,** on June 20, 2005 the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (“WMATA”) and the Takoma Metro Associates Limited Partnership signed a Joint Development Sales Agreement (the “Contract”) for the sale of and development of approximately five acres of the 6.8 acres of bus, parking and open space located at the Takoma Metro Station; and
- WHEREAS,** the WMATA Compact requires the WMATA Board to amend the Mass Transit Plan before the proposed sale can be completed; and
- WHEREAS,** a public hearing on the proposed amendment to the Mass Transit Plan has been set for October 11, 2006 before the WMATA Board; and
- WHEREAS,** the City Council has reviewed the Contract and the July 2006 conceptual Site Plan (“site plan”); and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan confines the transportation facilities to the narrow and awkwardly-shaped 1.9 acres of land proposed to be retained by WMATA after the sale and complete redevelopment of the rest of the property; AND
- WHEREAS,** the site plan reconfigures and limits the transportation facilities in such a way that service for transit users, especially handicapped persons, is severely diminished and cannot be remedied without significant changes to the site plan or, if the conceptual site plan were approved, without significant expense by WMATA; and

- WHEREAS,** several studies provided by WMATA as background information for the public hearing show that there is a need for at least eleven bus bays on site plus space for lay-overs and the developer's transportation impact study acknowledges that the Takoma Transportation Study recommends providing twelve bus bays to accommodate growing ridership on Metro and Ride On; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan and Contract provide for only ten bus bays, the space available for buses to idle on site is reduced from the amount of space currently available, and the area allocated for bus use would contain no room for future expansion; and
- WHEREAS,** bus bay projections normally only include those required to accommodate bus service that has been approved in adopted budgets or five-year transportation programs; room for future bus bay expansion at the Takoma Metro is needed for bus service that may be approved in the future due to increased demand and/or increased funding availability; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan and Contract call for a reduction in the number of available parking spaces in the public parking lot to 75 spaces if the surface lot option is chosen or 128 spaces if the two-level parking structure is chosen, even though the parking counts presented in the developer's transit impact study showed the following occupancy levels (with parking restriction information added): from 8:30 - 10:00 am, 96 cars in 99 legal spaces (includes 6 handicapped spaces, 5 Kiss and Ride spaces, and 1 Flexcar space available all day); from 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, 151 cars in 159 legal spaces; and, from 3:30 - 7:00 pm, 120 cars in 72 legal spaces; and
- WHEREAS,** scattered on-street parking spaces in front of the townhouses will provide some additional public parking, but will cause significantly-increased congestion on site and in the shared bus/car traffic circle as people try to find parking after the small parking lot is full; and
- WHEREAS,** dropping people off at the station will be much more difficult as the seven Kiss and Ride parking spaces are split into two locations—one at the bus entrance to the station and one on an interior road requiring patrons to use the bus/car traffic circle—neither of which is adjacent to the elevator entrance, as compared to the current situation which has eight Kiss and Ride parking spaces near the elevator and separated from bus traffic; and
- WHEREAS,** persons with mobility handicaps in particular will find diminished accessibility to the Takoma Station as no convenient drop off access to the elevator tunnel is available, although, given the design and human nature, it is expected that persons will enter the bus/car traffic circle and stop in the circle to discharge a disabled person near the elevator even though it will cause a disruption in bus traffic at the station; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan reduces the space available for bicycle parking and storage at the station, and does not provide for bicycle routes through the site, even as the Metropolitan Branch Trail is poised to create significant additional bicycle traffic

to and from the Takoma Metro; and

WHEREAS, the site plan does not include the needed western entrance to the elevator or to Fourth Street as recommended by the Takoma Central District Plan, a component of the DC Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the constrained land area available for bus use, the reduction in short-term parking, the congestion of a shared bus/car traffic circle, the reduced access to the elevator for handicapped and other patrons, the reduced facilities for bicycles, and the reduced access for Kiss and Ride patrons are fundamentally inconsistent with the recommendations of the Takoma Central District Plan that “Redevelopment planning must recognize that the primary function of the Metro station site is to provide transit services. Secondary functions accommodating the needs of the local business community or potential new development must be designed in a manner to support current and future transit needs at the station;” and

WHEREAS, the proposed project reduces and does not enhance the effectiveness of the community’s mass transit facilities and reduces coordination between mass transportation and other transportation modes, contrary to the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration’s (“FTA”) joint development guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project would further reduce levels of service in failing adjacent intersections and increase traffic congestion such that the developer’s transit impact study notes the delay time at the Blair/Cedar/4th Street intersection would operate with a 19 minute delay and southbound Blair Road would operate with a 55 minute delay during the afternoon rush hour, causing havoc with bus schedules and anger from drivers and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, WMATA has neglected to explore alternative design approaches to the proposed development that facilitate, rather than reduce, access for transit patrons to transportation facilities and that improve, rather than constrain, the present and future transportation efficiency of Takoma Station; and

WHEREAS, the transit needs of the residents of Takoma Park, Maryland could be significantly and negatively affected by the proposed development if it goes forward as proposed in the Contract and site plan; and

WHEREAS, if WMATA should allow the proposed development to proceed, pursuant to the Contract, WMATA will be responsible for the costs of all of the transit-related improvements, which could easily exceed the sales price of the property, in order to meet the accessibility needs of handicapped patrons and to provide adequate bus and parking facilities for transit users; and

WHEREAS, WMATA has not provided essential financial information on the cost of the changes to the transit facilities so that the public can evaluate the costs and benefits of the proposal; and

WHEREAS, construction of residential units with two-car garages and front-door parking does not advance Transit Oriented Development goals, especially when the development of such units limits access to communities dependent on transit facilities; and

WHEREAS, the FTA must approve the final sale of this property for development and can do so only if the proposed development meets federal standards for Transit Oriented Development; and

WHEREAS, WMATA officials submitted their request on July 14, 2005 for federal approval of the sale.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT the Board of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is strongly urged to disapprove the amendment to the Mass Transit Plan which would accommodate this proposed reconfiguration of the transportation facilities at the Takoma Metro Station; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City Council opposes the reconfiguration of the Takoma Metro Station site in any way which reduces, rather than enhances, Takoma Park's transit options and opportunities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Takoma Park calls upon the Federal Transit Administration to deny its approval of the amendment to the Mass Transit Plan, as currently proposed, as contrary to the requirement that the transaction promote transit-oriented development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Takoma Park calls upon the Montgomery County Council, its state and federal elected officials, and the Federal Transit Administration to assist Takoma Park in ensuring that the FTA, WMATA and the District of Columbia properly consider the impacts of development at the Takoma Metro Station on the Takoma Park/Takoma, D.C. community.

Adopted this 3rd day of October, 2006.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter
City Clerk